

9 TIPS FOR MANAGING SEPARATION ANXIETY WHEN CHILDREN RETURN

For some parents and children, the idea of returning to CNC after pandemic closures is stressful. Many families will be experiencing separation anxiety and find the transition back to care challenging. Here are nine tips to help ease the transition back to care after pandemic closures.

1. Consider connecting ahead of time through a visit, phone call or online to help families understand what to expect. Children often look to their parents and adults for cues about their security. Conversations ahead of time with the parents and staff can help them feel more confident.
2. Establish a routine for drop off and pick up if it is not in the room. For example, in the red circle by the door, a big hug and a kiss and then the same staff does the hand off.
3. Provide a variety of self-guided activities for the first few days so that children can observe and explore independently. It also helps to have more staff available for individual children. Avoid large amounts of toys for the first two weeks. Clutter can create chaos in the room and make it overwhelming for both child and staff.
4. Have one staff assigned to a child with severe separation anxiety. This will allow the child to build a trusting relationship and can often diminish a child's crying or anxiety.
5. Reassure children and parents: Accept their feelings, provide reassurance and let the child dictate the physical contact they need. Reassure the parent that this is a normal response. Parents might be worried about the safety of in-person classes. Try to reassure them that separation anxiety is common and the staff will take good care of the children.
6. Observe what the child seems interested in so you can have those toys handy.
7. Consider your room setup. Are there quiet spaces for staff and children? Is the room too noisy and intense?
8. Children should still be receiving nurturing and caring guidance from the staff. Hugging or holding a child who is scared or have a child sit on your lap if they are upset, is still best practice.
9. Be realistic with your expectations. This applies to both the child and the staff. Expect flair ups. These may occur an hour after the child settles or two weeks after they return to CNC.

